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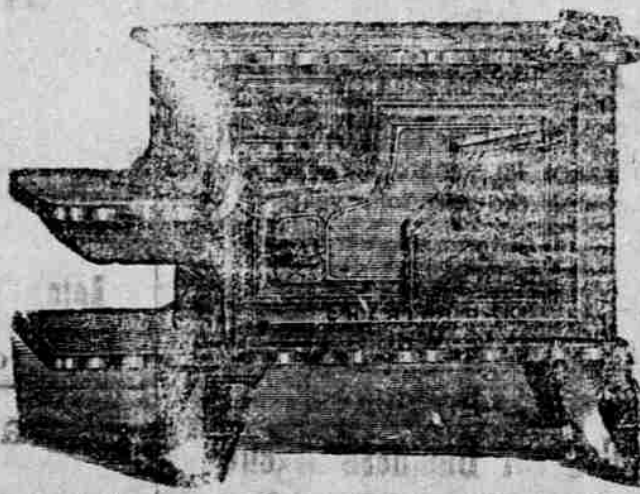
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LINCOLN'S GIFT
TO A HONOLULUAN

How Rev. James Kekela Won Watch
and Chain He Wears.



REV. JAMES KEKELA AND HIS WIFE.

DOWN by Kamaupali Church there lives a queer old man who has many a thrilling tale to tell. His name is Kekela, and he is over seventy-five years old. He has many a treasure, each with a story of its own, but most dearly prized among them is a beautiful gold watch and chain which the gray-haired old gentleman often exhibits with great pride. It was given him by President Lincoln for saving an American citizen from being eaten by cannibals. Here is the story:

In the little Sunday school conducted by the father of Rev. Mr. Parker many years ago over beyond the Nuuanu pail, there was a very devout little Hawaiian boy. His name was James Kekela, and he grew up with a great desire to spread the tidings of the gospel among the people of his own islands and the benighted ones further south, thousands of miles away.

He studied hard and preached among his brothers, finally, with a Reverend tacked to his name, going out over the sea on the hazardous task of carrying the gospel to the cannibal natives of the Marquesan group.

Attempts had repeatedly been made by white missionaries to institute friendly relations, but without avail, and the task had been given up. At last an aged chief, drawing near to death, sent to Hawaii for some one to come and explain the strange theory he had heard about, and Kekela went. He was received with courtesy by a few of the islanders, but there were those who resented and were unfriendly.

For years Kekela struggled to found a little church among them, and when he had succeeded the hostile ones threw stones through his windows, and repeatedly burned down his buildings. At one time they made an attack on his stone house, and killed nearly all of his little band of followers. These Kekela learned had been tortured to death and their bodies cooked and eaten by the enemies of his church, and the horror of it nearly drove him away, but he struggled on and finally came to be of some influence among them. Those who did not believe ceased to torment, at least, and tolerated his little church, but they were cannibals still, and were continually warring among themselves. Kekela and his flock were always in danger from the warring factions, but they remained and labored.

One day a strange ship came to the islands, and some of her crew landed. From afar the natives had seen the ship, and they waited, hidden among the rocks and brush. The men were caught in ambush, but they all escaped to their boats except one. The ship was the American whaler Congress, and the captive was William Whalen, first officer.

The ship went out to a safe distance and waited, for she could do nothing more. On the beach they saw the preparations for the horrible doom of their comrade. All night a fire was kept up, and weird ceremonies were performed. The captive, bound hand and foot, was cruelly tortured, the savages pulling his ears and nose, bending back his thumbs, brandishing their knives over him, and committing all manner of atrocities. The poor man cried out in his agony and prayed for death, but this was not to be until the sun had risen. He was compelled to see them carry the wood and prepare the fire upon which his body was to be roasted alive, and to see the savage children dancing in glee over the coming feast.

Just at dawn, when everything was ready, the missionary Kekela arrived. He had heard and had come to protest. His pleading did no good, and he offered a ransom, but the cannibals were inexorable. Kekela hastened away, and among his flock gathered up all the articles of value he could, among them his own boat and all that he possessed. With these he finally made a bargain for the life of the American, though the chief of the cannibal faction was surly, and treachery was feared. Kekela borrowed a boat, and undisturbed the dazed captive took him out to his ship. The officers begged him to go away with them, but to all their invitations he shook his head, and said his mission was among the people of the islands. They had to let him return. What he suffered in the years that followed only Kekela knows, but he stayed at his post, and nearly a year after he had saved the life of the American another ship cautiously approached the Marquesan islands.

She brought a message from the President of the United States, thanking him for his services and tendering him an invitation to visit the Republic. With the message came a beautifully made boat and a gold watch and chain, with other tokens, aggregating the value of \$500. These, President Lincoln begged Kekela to accept as an acknowledgment of what he had done. The boat is now worn out long since, but the old man still fondly wears the watch and chain. He remained many years among the Marquesans, and came away only when he was compelled to for the sake of his health. Although he is now nearly fourscore, and has grown very feeble, it is his one desire to return to his work there, and he keeps himself informed of all that is going on among the people there.

It is interesting to note that in the cannibal war just ended in the Marquesans, the cannibal chief who protested so persistently against the release of the American, was shot dead by the opposing faction, and was himself overtaken with the horrible fate he would have doomed his captive to.

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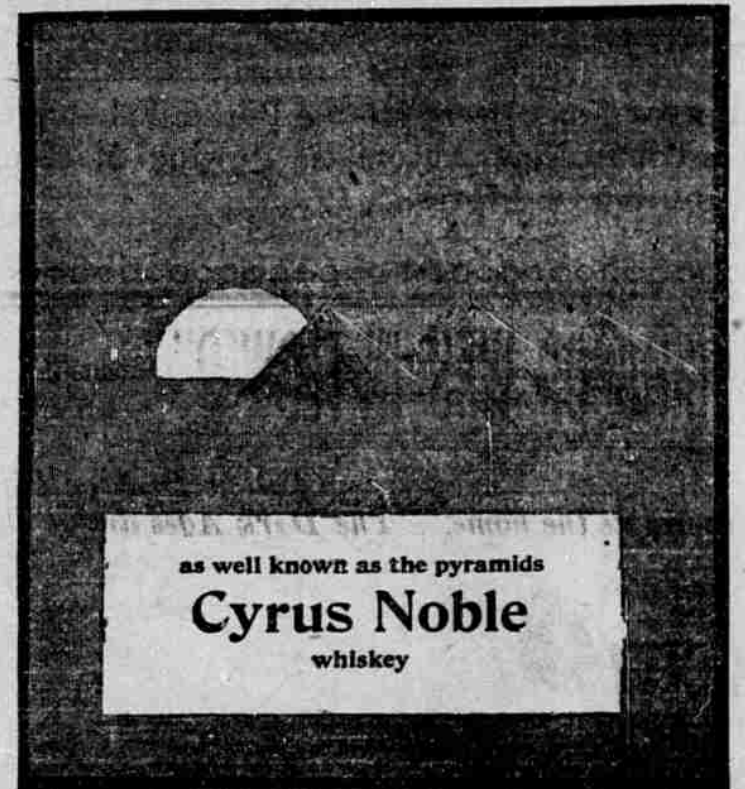
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